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Canada Council, National Endowment for the Arts to honour Oscar Peterson at Toronto conference

Ottawa, January 3, 2008 – The Canada Council for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Arts – the national arts funding agency in the United States – will join forces to pay tribute to the late Canadian jazz great Oscar Peterson when the International Association for Jazz Education (IAJE) holds its annual conference in Toronto in January.

The tribute to Dr. Peterson will be part of a gala concert and awards ceremony honouring the recipients of the 2008 NEA Jazz Master Fellowship, who include bandleader Quincy Jones, composer and arranger Tom McIntosh, trumpeter Joe Wilder, pianist Andrew Hill, percussionist Candido Camero and jazz advocate Gunther Schuller.

The two agencies will co-host the tribute to Dr. Peterson that includes a special presentation by Canada Council Chair Karen Kain and NEA Chairman Dana Gioia along with performances of Dr. Peterson's work by pianist, composer, arranger and former Peterson student Oliver Jones. Mr. Jones will play as soloist and with the Smithsonian Jazz Masterworks Orchestra. The event will take place at Constitution Hall in the Metro Toronto Convention Centre, on Friday, January 11 starting at 8 p.m. Mr. Jones's participation is made possible by the Canada Council for the Arts.

"Oscar Peterson was an outstanding musician who has made his mark on the world stage for nearly six decades," said Canada Council Chair Karen Kain. "We are delighted to partner with the National Endowment for the Arts to celebrate his life and his music, and to recognize the enormous contribution he has made to the arts in Canada and internationally."

NEA Chairman Dana Gioia said, "It is an honour to join with the Canada Council for the Arts to salute one of the world-premiere jazz pianists and composers. Our annual NEA Jazz Masters celebration is enhanced by this special recognition to a singular artist. One of Canada's national treasures, Oscar Peterson was also one of the world's great jazz masters."

Born and raised in Montreal, Oscar Peterson began playing the piano at the age of five and made his international debut as New York's Carnegie Hall in 1949. He has received seven Grammy Awards and was elected to the Canadian Music Hall of Fame in 1978. In 1972, he was made an Officer of the Order of Canada, and promoted to Companion of the Order of Canada in 1984. Considered perhaps the world's top jazz pianist, he is also known for such compositions as *Canadiana Suite*. Dr. Peterson died on December 23, 2007 at the age of 82.

The IAJE conference is expected to attract more than 7,000 musicians,

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educators, record executives, exhibitors, media and jazz enthusiasts from all over the world. The conference was last held in Toronto in 2001.

Media wishing to cover the tribute evening – or other events during the IAJE conference – should contact Diana Nazareth at 416-815-8883 or dlmedia.canada@sympatico.ca.

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